

In the Claims

Please cancel claims 1 through 18 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please add new claims 19-37 as follows:

500b1 -- 19. An inner tightening mechanism adapted to equip an article of footwear having a flexible or semi-rigid upper mounted on a sole, said tightening mechanism comprising:

a retention band connected to the inner surface of the upper by at least two anchoring points fixed on lateral and medial sides, respectively, of the upper, said retention band partially surrounding a foot of a wearer of the boot in a flexion fold area in a direction of a heel of the foot.

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20. An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein at least one of said anchoring points is positioned substantially above the sole.

21. An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 20, wherein at least one of said anchoring points is positioned substantially on a central portion of a line connecting a base of the heel to the flexion fold of the foot.

?? *article of footwear*

22. An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein one of said anchoring points includes a sliding return, and the retention band, which is fixed at an end to a second of said anchoring points, passes in the sliding return by defining a portion which covers the foot.

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23. An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein the retention band includes a fork comprising two arms, one of said arms integrating one of said anchoring points, and a second of said arms is fixed on an inner surface of the upper by a complementary anchoring point that is positioned on the same side of the upper as the first anchoring point.

24. An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein a portion of the retention band, which is comprised between a sliding return and an end of the retention band, includes a attachment mechanism capable of maintaining tension in the tightening mechanism.

25. An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 24, wherein the article of footwear is equipped with an inner shoe having an upper, said attachment mechanism constitutes a first attachment mechanism, and an upper of the inner shoe includes a second attachment mechanism that is complementary to the first attachment mechanism.

26. An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 24, wherein one of said anchoring points includes a sliding return, and the retention band, which is fixed at an end to a second of said anchoring points, passes in the sliding return by defining a portion which covers the foot, and wherein the portion of the retention band includes an attachment mechanism means that is complementary to the previously cited attachment mechanism.

27. An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 24, wherein the inner surface of the upper includes an attachment mechanism that is complementary to the previously cited attachment mechanism.

28. An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 24, wherein said attachment mechanism is a self-gripping type.

29. An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein one of said anchoring points includes a sliding return, and the retention band, which is fixed at an end to a second of said anchoring points, passes in the sliding return by defining a portion which covers the foot, and wherein the retention band includes a gripping mechanism that is arranged on said portion and which enables the loosening of the inner tightening mechanism.

30. An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein the article of footwear is equipped with an inner shoe which includes at least two raising elements that are fixed on the lateral side and on the medial side, respectively, of the inner shoe, and wherein the retention band takes support especially on the raising elements.

31. An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein one of said anchoring points includes a sliding return, and the retention band, which is fixed at an end to a second of said anchoring points, passes in the sliding return by defining a portion which covers the foot, and wherein the retention band includes at least one distribution plate fixed in the area of the portion, beneath the retention band.

32. An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 23, wherein one of the arms is positioned substantially along a primary direction that passes by the base of the heel and by the flexion fold, and wherein another of the arms also passes by the flexion fold but along a secondary direction that is less inclined than the primary direction.

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33. An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 32, wherein the arms are fixed to the upper on the medial side of the article of footwear.

34. An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 22, wherein the anchoring point which includes the sliding return is positioned on the medial side of the article of footwear.

AI 35. An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 22, wherein the upper includes a housing on the inner surface, in an area where the sliding return is located.

36. An article of footwear equipped with the inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19.

37. An article of footwear according to claim 36, further comprising an inner shoe which includes at least two raising elements that are fixed on the lateral side and on the medial side, respectively, of the inner shoe, and wherein the retention band takes support especially on the raising elements. --

REMARKS

Claims 19-37 will be pending upon entry of the amendment above.

A check is enclosed for payment of filing and claim fees. The Commissioner is authorized to charge any fee required for entry of this preliminary amendment to Deposit Account No. 19-0089.